



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

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MISSOURI TELEPHONE CUSTOMERS URGED TO EXAMINE 'OPT-OUT'

Jefferson City (March 14, 2002)---The Missouri Public Service Commission urges all Missouri telephone customers to evaluate whether they want the information contained in their monthly telephone bills to be given to another party.

"Customers should have received information from their local telephone company which would allow a customer to 'opt-out' of the marketing program by withdrawing their consent," stated Missouri Public Service Commission Chairman Kelvin Simmons. "Unfortunately, many customers may not have noticed the information in their telephone bills and therefore took no action," stated Simmons.

If a customer did not contact the telephone company explicitly withdrawing their consent, specific information regarding your telephone bill could be given to another party for marketing purposes. "A customer," stated Commissioner Steve Gaw, "can call their local telephone company and 'opt-out' in order to ensure that information is not given to another party. If the customer does not want that information released, they should contact the telephone company and tell them. Taking no action is viewed as an authorization allowing the local telephone company to give that information out," stated Commissioner Gaw.

Gaw noted that federal legislation is pending which would require the companies to seek permission prior to releasing personal information. Another bill enforces 'opt-out'.

In 1998, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established privacy rules which required the telecommunications companies to get consent from their customers before that information could be sold to a third party. The FCC's decision was later challenged and overturned in court. In September 2001, the FCC issued a clarification of their initial order which allowed carriers to rely on the "opt-out" means for customer approval. The FCC is currently re-considering its privacy rules.

(more)

“If a customer wants to keep their telephone information such as time, date and destination of a telephone call from being released to another party, it is important that they contact their local telephone company and tell them they want to ‘opt-out’. Otherwise that information can be given out,” stated Chairman Simmons.

Customers having questions about ‘opt-out’ or who wish to ‘opt-out’, should call the following numbers if they are a local telephone customer of Southwestern Bell, Verizon or Sprint:

Verizon residential customers: (Automated System)	1-866-483-9700
Verizon business customers: (Automated System)	1-866-554-5055
Sprint:	1-888-212-2145
Southwestern Bell: (Questions -live person response)	1-800-464-7928
Southwestern Bell: (Automated System)	1-800-315-8303

Consumers can also provide comments to the FCC at <http://www.fcc.gov/e-file/email.html>

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